



Question of the Week

When should I fertilize my lawn?

If you only fertilize your lawn once a year, do it in the fall. Wait until about 10 days after the ambient air temperature drops below 50°F—typically between Halloween and Thanksgiving. This will ensure that all the fertilizer goes to root growth rather than shoot growth. It's the grass roots that regenerate and sustain a healthy lawn.

In the spring more than half of the energy of the grass plant is directed into the green shoots. Fertilizing now only encourages top growth at the expense of the plant's perennial root system.

In the hot, dry days of summer, neither the roots nor the shoots grow much. If you do fertilize in summer, make sure to irrigate the fertilized area on a regular basis and use a slow-release form of nitrogen to prevent burning the plants or pushing growth at a time when the plant can't sustain it.

During the cool days of fall the growth the shoots of the plant slows down, but the roots will continue to grow and take up nutrients until the ground freezes. This is the best time to fertilize, because more than half of the energy of the plant is going into growing roots.

If you must fertilize your lawn in the spring, only apply minimal amounts of nitrogen. Keep the heavier applications for late fall. For more information about lawn care, visit our new interactive Web page at <http://extension.unh.edu/agric/turf/turfipm.htm>

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension's Family, Home & Garden Education Center Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or Wednesdays, 5:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m. You can also email us at answers@unh.edu